

## **Iowa Youth Congress Annual Event Proposals**

### **Music Program for Special Education Students (Lily Huber)**

- Description: Students who are in the special education programs throughout schools in Iowa do not have the same opportunity to thrive from music programs as mainstream students do. Often times music groups are too competitive or exclusive for special education students to be involved at levels that would benefit the special education student.
- Solution: We propose a music program specifically established to cater to the needs of special education students. Numerous studies have shown the positive effects of music therapy and consistent involvement and exposure to musical groups. We see this as an opportunity to allow these students to use music as a means of developing positive behaviors and skills because exclusive attention will be focused on the students' needs and skill level.

### **High School Dropout Prevention and Success Plan (Kenora Wallace)**

- Description: There continues to be an upward trend in the dropout rate of students in the state of Iowa. There are a variety of reasons students choose to drop-out of school – whether it's because of teen pregnancy, an ill parent at home, or it could be they simply lack motivation. The youth of Iowa have enough challenges to face once they graduate, they do not need to struggle their way to adulthood without a proper high school education. As a result, individuals, businesses, communities, and the government of Iowa are being negatively affected. Correlation can be drawn between dropout rates and the rising rate of unemployment, the number of incarcerations, the level of poverty, and an array of other societal issues. Even though the decision to drop-out is an individual choice to be made, its effects are felt across the state and a stricter drop-out policy must be established.
- Solution: I propose a law that requires students who choose to drop-out of school at the age of 16 to acquire a GED or prove stable employment by the time they are 18. Students will have to take responsibility for their own education if they forfeit the opportunity for a public education or prove they are capable of obtaining employment so that they do not become detriments to the Iowa economy. If, by the time they are 18 they have not met one of the two guidelines their driver's license will be revoked or state aid will be diminished.

### **Already Americans Act (Kimmer Zambrano)**

- Title/Purpose: Description: There are many young adults in America who have spent the majority of their lives in this country. They know only the American way and live their lives just as any other born American citizen. However, they are undocumented by no choice of their own, and are labeled illegal. Because of this label they are trapped and can only go so far with their dreams. An undocumented person can not find a legal job, and if they want to enter college with a desire to better themselves, they would have to pay the international fee, but how can someone do so when they can't even work to get money? Even if one did complete college, they would not be able to contribute to the country because they don't have documents to support their profession. So these students have no way to pay the tuition they must pay in order to enter universities or colleges. Also, there are not many financial aid opportunities to help them because documentation is necessary. In so many words, they are invisible because they can't work to pay their fees or get an education, they are just there. These students want to pursue a higher education and move forward like any other American, but they can't. So why should we not give them the citizenship as the Americans they already are?
- Solution: This is neither their fault nor their choice. So to solve this issue, we want to pass the Already American Act. This will allow children of illegal immigrants from any country a path to citizenship by meeting the following requirements that reflect their potential as American citizens and devotion to contributing to society:
  1. They must complete 2 years of college maintaining a grade point average of 2.8OR
  2. They must enter a branch of the military and serve for a minimum of two years

### **Bottle Bill (Erin Manful/Okey Ukah)**

- Description: The bottle deposit law is very effective in keeping cans and bottles of particular beverages from littering our community, however times have changed and the old law does not reflect our changing beverage habits. The consumption/use of water and sports drinks has gone up significantly, yet those bottles are not available for deposit rules, even though they are contributing to the litter problem.

- Solution: Water bottles and sports drink bottles need to be amended to the original law so that there is incentive to the community to place these bottles where they belong – in the recycling bins!

### **Increase in Homeless Shelters (Odessa)**

- Description: With the increasingly hard economic situation the current numbers of homeless shelters are at or over capacity in most areas. The majority of these homeless shelters are run by private agencies or charities, and their capacity is limited. By providing more state funded shelters those who are in need will have a warm and a safe place to stay.
- Solution: Build or increase the number of shelters across the state with more requirements.

### **Confidentiality Law with Media (Natalie)**

- Description: The Code of Iowa Chapter 232.19 (Child Custody) subsection 4; states: Information pertaining to a child who is at least ten years of age and who is taken into custody for a delinquent act which would be a public offense is a public record and is not confidential under Section 232.147. Chapter 232.2 subsections 5, the Code of Iowa defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 and delinquent act is defined as a violation of any state law or local ordinance which would constitute a public offense if committed by an adult except any offense which by law exempted from the jurisdiction of this Chapter. In the Code of Iowa there is a big problem with the language, it the fact that it does not use the word arrest. The term delinquent act and taking a child into custody pertains to anyone under the age of 18, but media sources such as newspapers, publish names of children ages 10 to 17 under arrest logs/information along with their age and home, or given a "ticket." The newspapers publishing the name of any child taken into custody raises ethical concerns because of the lifetime stigma, negative public opinion and ridicule at school, which sometimes leads to further bullying in neighborhoods and schools. The Code of Iowa's purpose of the juvenile process is to provide care education and training for the children involved and not to "punish them."
- Solution: Our solution is to either repeal the law as a whole or make amendments to the age of reporting. The law allows authorities, i.e. law enforcement to release information, but the newspaper editors ultimately decide if the names are published, which leaves room for which names are chosen and when those names are published. Finally it is our understanding that this law was enacted in 1987. This law was enacted over twenty three years ago; daily tax money, i.e. Title

19 funding is for children with behavior problems. The Code of Iowa 232.19(4) sets the child up for being labeled and could face a lifetime of behavior problems because the public's view from seeing a child's name listed under arrest in the newspaper.

### **Dream Act, in-state tuition and scholarships (Josh)**

- Description: Over 3 million youth graduate from high school every year and about 65,000 of those cannot move on because they have the title of an illegal immigrant. Most of these graduates are goodhearted, involved, brilliant teens; teens with dreams of becoming something bigger. They only need a chance to prove that they can make good, contributing citizens. The DREAM Act provides them with this opportunity.
- Solution: The DREAM Act provides them with this opportunity.

### **More funding for after schools programs for high schools (Megan)**

- Description: Each day more than 15 million youth in the United States are unsupervised after school. The hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. Teens who do not participate in after school programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and are more likely to drink, smoke and engage in sexual activity. Although schools have funding for most sports programs, many students don't show interest or ability in that area. Low income students don't have access to quality activities after school that are interesting and keep them out of trouble.
- Solution: If the State of Iowa contributed more money to after school programs, the government would reap rewards because the cost of after school programs pales in comparison to the cost of keeping a teenager in the juvenile justice system, after he or she gets into trouble. The State of Iowa should increase funding for after school programs so that more teens are able to become engaged in something safe and healthy.

### **Access to health clinics in high schools for those not insured (Jasmin)**

- Description: School based high school clinics can provide to student's health services as well as other health related services dealing with alcoholism, sexual abuse, and HIV/aids. A health clinic also provides free services such as physical examination and counseling. Another important factor for health clinics in communities is providing critical and emergency care services.

- Solution: An example would be in a Los Angeles High School where there was a big riot and the high school clinics provided help for the students such as counseling and treatments for their injuries. A recent study conducted in 2007 in four Mississippi high schools looked at schools with and without health clinics. Schools offering health clinic services provided many positive aspects of clinics for students in schools. Those students using health clinic services at the high school recorded more positive and favorable results in regards to personal resiliency, comfort levels, minimizing health risks and satisfaction. 171 students participated in this study. 60% reported that the school health clinic was the only source of health care they received. The high school health clinics helped students feel more safe and comfortable in their school and home environments. Students with the lowest scores in regards to personal health issues and health risks were those students that did not have access to a high school health clinic. School health clinics have long been cited as a source to improve reproductive health care for students. School health clinics can assist with education, removing barriers, counseling, as well as birth control and pregnancy issues. Culturally, there is some opposition to health clinics because of traditional values and the role of government interfering with the rights of personal or family issues and the student.

#### Sources:

Bradford, J. and O'Sullivan, P., The Relationship Between the Use Of Health Clinics In Rural Mississippi Schools and the CHIP-AE Adolescent Health Profile, *Journal of School Nursing*, v. 23 n. 5, p. 293 - 298, 2007.

Creel, Liz C., and Rebecca J. Perry. Improving the Quality of Reproductive Health Care for Young People. *PRB Population, Reference Bureau*. May 2003: n.p. *SIRS Researcher*.

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#### **Revision of Healthy Kids Act – state fund counselors - increase awareness of sleep deprivation and obesity (Elaine & Roshan)**

- Description: According to the USDA, about 35% of the United States' children are overweight-carrying levels of fat far higher than those considered healthy. Multiple causes have been named, from lowered levels of physical activity to the increased reliance on fast food and soda as staples for children when their parents don't have the time to make healthier food. Since overweight children are more likely to be overweight as adults, it is especially important to remedy the problem while they are young, because obesity increases the risk of multiple health problems. According to the Human Services, these problems include type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease, stroke, metabolic syndrome, certain types of cancers, osteoarthritis, gallbladder disease, and fatty liver disease and pregnancy complications.

- **Solution:** Activity based incentives should be used to encourage student participation. In Gooding, Idaho, schools reward students with activity-based field trips with participation in skating, skiing, snow-shoeing, and others. While high schools may be less flexible with such excursions, a process with similar values could be established. Appeals to student minds would also be effective, especially in the cafeteria. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recently found that psychology is one of the most effective tools to encourage students to eat well. Previous law forced fruit onto students' trays, and the food ended up in the trash. Instead, schools such as those in Corning City School District in New York have cafeteria workers ask students about their choices, give often unappealing foods certain names, and arranged food options to draw attention to healthy choices. In schools, consumption of vegetables and salad rose up to 30% with simple changes. Clearly, a process targeting student goals can make a significantly larger change than mandatory nutritional profiling.

#### **Incentive for public service for tuition assistance (Eddie)**

- **Description:** Increasing public service and providing higher education opportunities
- **Solution:** Free tuition to public universities if pledge certain amount of public service

#### **Advanced Placement programs - or advanced courses; on-line for schools that don't offer (Nayasha)**

- **Description:** Rural and inner city schools do not have the funding necessary to support a viable and in-depth Advanced Placement program.
- **Solution:** allow students to take classes at other schools that do offer these courses/provide benefits to teachers who get their doctorate in a subject and teach at a college level.

#### **Closed Captioning where state can regulate (Kensie)**

- **Description:** The closed captioning issue is one that can impact the general public. Everyone and anyone can benefit from good closed captioning. Closed captions are the printed dialogue of the program. They help people know what people are saying on T.V. programs or how people can be aware of what is happening in their communities, through the news, weather or events that are publicized on television. More and more, it's become frustrating for students who are in classrooms where media is used and there is no closed captioning, they watch live news, but don't know what is being said, or they look at videos or websites on the internet with no closed captioning. With all the development in technology, there should be better closed

captioning and everything should be accessible to all people no matter if they can hear or not.

- Solution: H.R. the twenty-first Century Communication and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. *Monday, 26 July 2010* "Today, the House of Representatives will consider H.R. 3101, the Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. The legislation updates the Communications Act to help ensure that individuals with vision, hearing, and other disabilities are able to utilize fully broadband services and equipment and better access video programming devices. Although Congress has previously acted to ensure access to communications devices by people with disabilities, these laws were last updated in 1996. Since that time, the communications marketplace has undergone a fundamental transformation, driven by broadband. Internet-based and digital technologies are now pervasive, offering innovative and effective ways to communicate and share information. Through increased mobility and the use of data, the benefits of modern technology have profoundly altered our everyday lives, streamlining tasks and allowing mobile access to the Internet and an increasingly diverse menu of applications and services. Smartphones, text messaging, and video conferencing are but a few of the many technologies that a growing number of Americans rely on daily. The extraordinary benefits of many of these technologies, however, are often not accessible to individuals with disabilities."

### **Hearing Aids affordable (Sylvia)**

- Description: Health insurance companies have largely refused to cover hearing aids, yet the cost of hearing aids continues to rise. Many people cannot afford to get hearing aids, so they put up with their hearing loss. It's not fair how expensive it is, yet a lot of people are losing their hearing due to a loud environment. The price range is usually \$550-\$3000 per hearing aid, but the price depends on several factors. The price is based on the many different brands, models and styles available to choose from, as well as the circuit inside, programmable or digital, also may change the price. Your hearing aids are custom-made based on your individual ear and your specific hearing needs. That includes lifetime cleaning and check-ups. There are very few insurance groups that have hearing aid coverage, so it's really up to you to pay for the full prices. And a lot of people can't afford it without any programs or coverage helping them along the way. Even if you have an insurance that covers hearing aids, you

STILL have to pay at least up to 1,890 dollars. Please give the people...their ability to hear without suffering the blow.

- Solution: Having the State mandate prices of hearing aids in order for people hard of hearing to be able to have the same quality of life as everyone else.

### **Graduated Driver Licensing (Lilliane)**

- Description: In the past five years, 162 Iowa teen drivers, ages 14-17, have lost their lives in crashes (CDC, 2009). To reduce these tragic losses, we must support young drivers as they learn, and give them appropriate guidance in preparation for the complexities of driving. By maximizing experience and minimizing risks while this experience is gained, we protect teens while they are learning and produce safer drivers in the long-run.

Research has shown that teen driver crashes can be reduced by improving the structure of driver licensing systems. Graduated Driver Licensing, or GDL, is an approach that allows young drivers to gain experience while minimizing risks to themselves and others with whom they share the road.

- Solution: National and state evaluations, as well as local data, suggest the most influential changes we can make to improve Iowa's current GDL system are:

Instruction Permit: Extend the time required for teens to hold an instruction permit to 12 months. (Current system requires only 6 months.)

Intermediate License (First 12 months of licensure): Allow nighttime driving between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. only if teen is accompanied by a licensed adult. Waivers are available to allow teens to drive to and from school and work activities after 10:00 p.m. (Current nighttime limit is 12:30 a.m. until 5:00 a.m.)

Limit passengers to no more than one non-family member under the age of 21. (Current GDL limits passengers to the number of seat belts in the vehicle.)

### **Teen Violence and racial harassment awareness (Resolution)**

- Description: Teen violence and harassment is increasing across the state and the nation. Harassment is made to those in regards to sexual orientation, color of skin, background and more. While the state has passed a law regarding bullying, there still seems to be a number of cases seen.



- Solution: It would be great to have the Governor speak on this issue and make sure the schools are doing all possible to prevent this from happening and creating opportunities to discuss these issues.

### **Revision of DUI Law (Resolution – Sid)**

- Description: Too many people are drinking and driving. DUI's are currently not enough to resolve this issue. Drunk driving is a dangerous act of irresponsibility. Not only does this act endanger ones self, but it also endangers others, such as drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. This problem has changed little with the DUI solution, and has not made a difference let alone a difference that makes people think twice.
- Solution: I propose a bill to go along with the current DUI. If one drives with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 or higher, the vehicle that the person committed the offence in, unless the vehicle was stolen, becomes property of the state when they are taken into custody. This means that the state will take ownership regardless if that vehicle is borrowed or owned by the offender. If the vehicle was stolen then it will then be given back to the owner and all fees will be charged to the offender. If the vehicle has not been full paid for then it will be returned to the dealer and profits will be returned. I agree that it is a big step, but this should be make people think twice about turning the key drunk.